

CLAIM AMENDMENT

1. (Currently Amended) A device for grasping and carrying thin cord-like objects comprising:

a hollow, substantially rigid shaft having a proximal end, a straight proximal portion extending along an axis distally of the proximal end, a curved rigid distal portion having a curved centerline curving away from the axis, and a distal end, the distal end being pointed and adapted to pierce soft tissue, and a lumen extending along the axis and the curved centerline from the proximal end to the distal end of said shaft;

a solid rod having a proximal end and a distal end, said rod being positioned in the lumen of the proximal portion of the shaft in reciprocally sliding relationship therewith;

first and second wire-like elements, each having a distal end and a proximal end, said first and second wire-like elements being attached at their respective proximal ends to the distal end of said rod so as to extend distally therefrom and move through the curved distal portion of the shaft in conjunction with the movement of said rod along the axis, said first wire-like element defining a hook-shaped configuration at the distal end thereof; and

actuation means attached to the proximal end of said rod and to the proximal end of said shaft for moving said rod and said wire-like elements between: (i) a first position wherein the distal ends of said wire-like elements are contained within said shaft in closely spaced relation to one another, and (ii) a second position wherein the distal ends of said wire-like elements extend outwardly from the distal end of said shaft in

flared relationship to one another, wherein said actuation means comprises:

a housing attached to the proximal end of said shaft;

a trigger pivotally attached to said housing; and

a spring biased piston attached to the proximal end of said rod and configured to slide within said housing so as to move said rod between the first and second positions;

said first and second wire-like elements being adapted so that when said wire-like elements are in the second position, the distal ends of said first wire-like element and said second wire-like element cooperate to define a gap therebetween for receiving and trapping the thin cord-like object, and wherein the distal end of said first wire-like element grasps the thin cord-like object and carries the thin cord-like object back toward and into the distal end of said shaft when said wire-like elements are moved from the second position to the first position;

whereby said wire-like elements are further adapted to secure the thin cord-like object to said shaft when said wire-like elements are moved from the second position to the first position and release the thin cord-like object when said wire-like elements are moved from the first position to the second position.

2-3 (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) A method for grasping and carrying a thin cord-like object comprising:

(1) providing a device comprising:

a hollow, substantially rigid shaft having a proximal end, a straight proximal portion extending along an axis distally

of the proximal end, a curved rigid distal portion having a curved centerline curving away from the axis and a distal end, the distal end being pointed and adapted to pierce soft tissue, and a lumen extending along the axis and the curved centerline from the proximal end to the distal end of said shaft;

a solid rod having a proximal end and a distal end, said rod being positioned in the lumen of the proximal portion of the shaft in reciprocally sliding relationship therewith;

first and second wire-like elements each having a distal end and a proximal end, said first and second wire-like elements being attached at their respective proximal ends to the distal end of said rod so as to extend distally therefrom and move through the curved distal portion of the shaft in conjunction with the movement of said rod, said first wire-like element defining a hook-shaped configuration at the distal end thereof; and

actuation means attached to the proximal end of said rod and to the proximal end of said shaft for moving said rod and said wire-like elements between (i) a first position wherein the distal ends of said wire-like elements are contained within said shaft in closely spaced relation to another, and (ii) a second position wherein the distal ends of said wire-like elements extend outwardly from the distal end of said shaft in flared relationship to one another, wherein the actuation means comprises:

a housing attached to the proximal end of said shaft;

a trigger pivotally attached to said housing; and

a spring biased piston attached to the proximal end of said rod and configured to slide within said housing so as to move said rod between the first and second positions;

(2) positioning said rod and said wire-like elements in the first position;

(3) forcing the distal end of said shaft through the soft tissue and maneuvering the distal end of said shaft so that it is adjacent to the thin cord-like object which is to be grasped;

(4) positioning said rod and said wire-like elements in the second position by activating said trigger of the actuation means, and maneuvering the distal end of said shaft as needed so as to position the flared distal ends of said wire-like elements on opposite sides of the cord-like object so as to define a gap therebetween for receiving and trapping the thin cord-like object;

(5) thereafter positioning said rod and said wire-like elements in the first position by releasing the trigger of the actuation means, whereby the distal end of said first wire-like element grasps the thin cord-like object and carries the thin cord-like object back toward and into the distal end of said shaft as said wire-like elements are moved from the second position to the first position, whereby the wire-like elements are adapted to secure the thin cord-like object to said shaft when said wire-like elements are moved from the second position to the first position and release the thin cord-like object when said wire-like elements are moved from ~~form~~ the first position to the second position; and

(6) repeating steps (2) through (5) so as to further maneuver the distal end of said shaft to grasp the thin cord-like object and pass it through the soft tissue.